



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
National Marine Sanctuary Program**

West Coast Region
99 Pacific Street, Bldg 200, Suite K
Monterey, CA 93940

February 24, 2006

Phil Isenberg, Chair
MLPA - Blue Ribbon Task Force
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: NMSP Comments on the Draft Management Plan and Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptive Management Frameworks

Dear Chair Isenberg:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on these framework documents as they identify critical steps in the successful implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) has four sanctuaries along the California coast. Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, Monterey Bay and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuaries are adjacent to almost a quarter of the California coast.

We have appreciated the close cooperation that has existed to date between the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) and the MLPA Initiative's Central Coast Project. As you know, the MBNMS has its own process underway that is considering marine protected areas (MPAs) in the federal waters of the MBNMS. Working closely with MLPA and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) staff during the MLPA Initiative's siting phase has been critical, and we have found the sharing of information, staffing, and the cooperative funding of projects to be mutually beneficial. As MPAs are implemented on the Central Coast and beyond, the NMSP and the individual sanctuaries hope to be a valuable partner in achieving the objectives described in these management documents. The purposes of the MLPA and the NMSP are aligned in many ways and we would like to extend our assistance in the areas of research and monitoring, and education and outreach in support of these common goals.

In terms of research and monitoring activities which we could develop partner relationships, the NMSP has assets it can make available for the science efforts that the framework describes. We have two capable 65' research vessels that can conduct a wide range of research and monitoring projects along the coast. We also have an established ecosystem monitoring program and web portal known as the Sanctuary Integrated Monitoring Network (SIMoN) that not only serves as a clearinghouse for information on research and long-term monitoring, but provides valuable interactive education on marine resources and research. SIMoN began in the MBNMS but has been expanding to the other California sites, and new information and functionality is continually added as the site grows.

**Olympic Coast
National Marine Sanctuary**
115 E. Railroad Ave., Ste 301
Port Angeles, WA 98362

**Cordell Bank
National Marine Sanctuary**
P.O. Box 159
Olema, CA 94950

**Gulf of the Farallones
National Marine Sanctuary**
Building 991, Presidio of SF
San Francisco, CA 94129

**Monterey Bay
National Marine Sanctuary**
299 Foam Street
Monterey, CA 93940

**Channel Islands
National Marine Sanctuary**
113 Harbor Way
Santa Barbara, CA 93109

The National Marine Sanctuary Program also has one of the most established education and outreach programs in federal resource management. We have strong expertise in developing and conveying resource protection messages. As MPAs are designated, our education and outreach programs could be used to not only promote awareness and compliance with regulations, but could assist with public appreciation of MPAs and the marine life they protect. We also have a volunteer network that could be used in an interpretative capacity out on the water, and along the shore.

The NMSP and the State have partnered on a wide variety of projects through a number of mechanisms, including as agency partners and via nonprofit foundations associated with the sanctuaries. Specifically in the context of MPAs, in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, there have been a number of jointly funded and staffed projects between the Sanctuary and the State aimed at effectively managing the recently designated MPAs in that area. Additionally, the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation and the State have recently entered into a partnership to map coastal waters along central California with the Sanctuary Program providing \$200,000 in ship time and services. These projects have helped achieve the goals of both the Sanctuary and the State.

While we appreciate the need to be comprehensive with the identified management plans, we are concerned that strategies for implementation outlined in the documents not be so ambitious as to unduly prevent moving forward with MPA designation due to funding constraints. Additional language providing for project scalability may help CDFG remain appropriately flexible in MPA implementation, while still meeting the requirements of the MLPA. As the plans will require the help of partners, we hope that we, along with other potential partners can be specifically identified where appropriate.

We ask that the Blue Ribbon Task Force, MLPA, CDFG, and Resources Agency staff consider the National Marine Sanctuary Program to be a close partner in implementing MPAs, achieving the goals of the MLPA and in protecting the long-term health of our coast.

Sincerely,



William J. Douros

Regional Superintendent (acting)

cc:

Brian Baird, Assistant Secretary for Resources
Gary Stacey, Marine Region Manager, California DFG